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FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION 1918

OUTREACHER

SPECIAL BALLOT ISSUE

AUGUST 1986

FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

GREAT DECISIONS '86
NATIONAL OPINION BALLOT REPORT

August 1986: *Following are highlights of views expressed by participants in the nationwide* Great Decisions *program for 1986. This report is based on 61,615 Opinion Ballots cast as of May 31, 1986. The ballots were tabulated under the supervision of Esther Fleishman, vice president of Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.*

Ballots are bound into the Great Decisions '86 *briefing book, prepared by the editors of the national nonpartisan Foreign Policy Association. The 96-page book includes impartial background and analyses of eight critical foreign policy issues facing the United States. More than 300,000 Americans joined in study and discussion of the eight topics during February and March. This is the 32nd year of the nationwide* Great Decisions *study and discussion program, the largest citizen education program of its kind in the country.*

Topic 1: HOW FOREIGN POLICY IS MADE: The Case of Central America

Issue A

"Leave the making of foreign policy to the President and Congress" seems to be what participants in the 1986 Great Decisions program are saying, but barely. By a slim majority, only the President, Congress and the State Department are seen as having the right amount of influence on foreign policymaking.

With a much stronger voice, respondents are saying that certain groups have too much influence. Leading the list are lobbyists (75%), followed by the Defense Department (63%), the press and television (62%) and the CIA (59%). Only the public is seen by significant numbers (70%) as having too little influence.

The conclusion to be drawn is that the making of foreign policy is perceived as fragmented at best. No single person, institution or group is seen as clearly dominant in terms of having the right amount of influence—not even the President, who was identified by the largest number as having the right amount of influence, but even then by only 58%.

A tantalizing and potentially highly significant finding is that 70% think the public has too little influence. Of all the actors listed, Congress most directly represents the voice of the public, yet only 28% think that Congress has too little influence. One is tempted to infer that large numbers of respondents do not see their elected representatives as providing them with the influence over foreign policymaking that they feel is their due. It is, of course, beyond the scope of these Opinion Ballots to draw such conclusions. Yet this finding cannot be ignored. One is merely left to wonder through which institutional mechanism, if not Congress, respondents would want the public to have greater influence over the making of foreign policy.

Issue B

This question assesses how respondents view U.S. policy toward Central America. Given four policy goals, respondents were asked to select the one that they view as the most important.

While four distinct goals were offered, there is a dichotomy between the first set of two and the second set. The first set focuses on prevention of Communist expansion, while the second focuses on promotion of democracy and economic development.

Two thirds (66%) identify promotion of democracy and economic and social development as primary goals, while only 29% view prevention of Communist expansion as the most important goal of U.S. policy toward Central America.

Of those who view preventing Communist expansion as the most important goal, 16% would include the use of military force, while 13% would exclude military force.

Whereas one fourth (25%) view promoting democracy by withholding support from governments that violate political and human rights as the most important goal of U.S. policy toward Central America, 41% regard promoting economic and social development by increasing U.S. economic aid and trade as the primary goal.

When this question appeared on the *Great Decisions '85* Opinion Ballot, the same percentage of respondents (66%) identified promotion of democracy and development as primary goals, although a slightly higher number (43%) favored an unconditional increase in U.S. aid and trade. Of the 28% who viewed preventing Communist expansion as the most important goal, respondents were split evenly in 1985 between those who would or would not use military force to achieve the goal.

Ballots Tabulated: 3,019

Issue A. How would you rate the following actors in terms of their influence on foreign policymaking?

	Too Much Influence	Right Amount of Influence	Too Little Influence
	%	%	%
a. President	35	58	8
b. Presidential advisers	48	45	7
c. Congress	18	54	28
d. State Department	13	55	32
e. Defense Department	63	30	7
f. Central Intelligence Agency	59	33	9
g. Press and television	62	33	5
h. Public	6	25	70
i. Lobbyists	75	19	7

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Issue B. The most important goal of U.S. policy toward Central America is to:

	%
1. Prevent Communist expansion by any means necessary, including military force.	16
2. Prevent Communist expansion by any means necessary, except military force.	13
3. Promote democracy by withholding support from governments that violate political and human rights.	25
4. Promote economic and social development by increasing U.S. economic aid and trade.	41
5. Other	4

Topic 2: 'STAR WARS' AND THE GENEVA TALKS: What Future for Arms Control?

Issue A

On the issue of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), respondents on the whole lean toward those policy options that view SDI as a bargaining chip: 80% agree that the United States should limit development of SDI in return for significant Soviet reductions in offensive weapons and 67% agree with the proposition that SDI should be scaled down because it will provoke a new arms race. Consistent with policies that would scale down and limit SDI, 75% of the respondents disagree that SDI be treated as nonnegotiable, even if it means forgoing an arms control agreement.

It is significant that while a solid majority is prepared to have the United States scale down the SDI program for fear of provoking a new arms race, a position that seems to imply a willingness to do so unilaterally, a considerably larger majority (80%) views SDI as a bargaining chip, and would agree to limit development of SDI in return for significant reductions in Soviet offensive weapons.

Ballots Tabulated: 4,294

Issue A. With regard to the Strategic Defense Initiative, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Agree to scale down the SDI program because it will provoke a new arms race and is harmful to U.S. security.	39	28	17	16
b. Agree to limit development of SDI in return for significant Soviet reductions in offensive weapons.	41	39	12	9
c. Treat SDI as nonnegotiable and proceed with development, even if it means forgoing an arms control agreement.	11	14	20	55

Topic 3: DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA: Focus on Argentina and Brazil

Issue A

Respondents were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with six policies that the United States might adopt in regard to helping solve the Latin American debt crisis.

A large majority of respondents, ranging from 70% to 83%, express agreement with five of the six proposals. Only the proposal to "lessen emphasis on austerity and make new loans designed to promote growth" finds agreement by less than a majority (48%).

While agreement with most proposals is wide, it lacks depth in that respondents by nearly two to one only "agreed somewhat" with the proposals offered. Only the statement that the United States should initiate a new Alliance for Progress with Latin America, which is favored by 83%, is agreed with strongly (42%) and agreed with somewhat (41%) about equally. The overall results tend to paint a picture of respondents in agreement that the Latin American debt crisis needs to be addressed, but not really quite certain that the proposed measures will work, and taking exception to the one measure that implies a degree of indulgence toward the debtors.

Issue B

In its relations with Latin American countries, respondents were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with four policy positions. Strongest agreement (94%) is expressed for giving priority to improving relations with democratic governments, followed by giving priority to assisting countries where U.S. interests are threatened (73%). Consistent with these positions, strong disagreement is registered for following a policy of benign neglect toward those countries in which the United States has no major interests (75%). The one policy option that produced real variance was to give priority to improving relations with governments that support U.S. policies, regardless of whether they are democratic or authoritarian, with 52% in agreement and 49% in disagreement.

Overall, respondents seem to be saying that the United States has responsibilities where Latin America is concerned, even in those countries in which it has no major interests. Consensus, however, breaks down once the issue of supporting governments regardless of their democratic or authoritarian character is introduced.

Ballots Tabulated: 4,161

Issue A. In its policy toward the Latin American debt crisis, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Let Latin American countries work out their own solutions with the IMF and banks.	28	45	20	7
b. Press the IMF and banks to work out lenient terms with Latin American debtors.	26	49	20	6
c. Offer assistance to Latin American countries that undertake austerity programs.	27	48	19	6

d. Lessen emphasis on austerity and make new loans designed to promote growth.	15	33	31	22
e. Reduce tariffs and eliminate quotas on imports from Latin America to help debtors earn foreign exchange to repay debts.	25	45	23	8
f. Initiate a new Alliance for Progress with Latin America.	42	41	12	5

Issue B. In its relations with Latin American countries, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Give priority to improving relations with democratic governments.	61	33	5	1
b. Give priority to assisting countries where U.S. interests are threatened.	24	49	21	7
c. Give priority to improving relations with governments that support U.S. policies, regardless of whether they are democratic or authoritarian.	16	36	28	21
d. Follow a policy of benign neglect toward those countries in which the U.S. has no major interests.	6	19	35	40

Topic 4: INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: In Search of a Response

Issue A

Presented with 12 methods by which to fight international terrorism, respondents were asked to rate each in terms of its effectiveness. Heading the list and following a close second, are the two methods that most clearly focus on the international aspect of terrorism: 73% consider as very effective improving international cooperation to catch and prosecute terrorists, and 68% think improving intelligence capabilities very effective. Also considered as very effective by more than a majority of respondents are: giving priority to eliminating the causes of terrorism (57%) and tightening airport security (54%). Only one position, attacking terrorist bases before they can be used to launch attacks, is considered as not very effective by at least half the respondents (50%).

If one were to combine the scores of each method rated as either very effective or somewhat effective, the result would show that a large majority of respondents are in agreement that indeed all methods would be effective, with the single exception of preemptive strikes against terrorist bases, which was considered very effective by less than a majority, but even that method was favored by 50%.

Ballots Tabulated: 4,081

Issue A. How would you rate the following steps in terms of their effectiveness in fighting international terrorism?

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective
	%	%	%
a. Tighten airport security.	54	41	4
b. Station U.S. sky marshals on flights.	20	45	35
c. Boycott unsafe airports.	46	37	17
d. Tighten security at embassies.	48	46	6
e. Improve intelligence capabilities.	68	28	4
f. Pressure countries that sponsor terrorism.	45	39	16
g. Attack terrorist bases before they can be used to launch attacks.	23	27	50
h. Improve international cooperation to catch and prosecute terrorists.	73	23	4
i. Give priority to eliminating the causes of terrorism.	57	29	14
j. Negotiate for the release of hostages.	27	43	30
k. Retaliate against terrorist groups that attack U.S. citizens or property.	33	35	33
l. Limit media coverage of terrorist actions.	43	39	18

Topic 5: EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND THE U.S.: Friction Among Friends

Issues A and B

Respondents were asked to rate as very, somewhat or not very effective six measures to improve U.S. competitiveness in world trade. These measures are protectionism, subsidizing exports, a laissez-faire economy, reducing the value of the dollar, international trade negotiations, and placing the burden on U.S. industry by improving productivity. Of all six measures, improving productivity was rated as very effective by the largest number (77%), while raising tariffs to protect U.S. industries is regarded as not very effective by 63%.

Of the remaining measures—with the exception of subsidizing U.S. exports—respondents are divided roughly evenly between regarding the suggested steps as either very or somewhat effective. But the vote on subsidizing U.S. exports was split down the middle between those who considered it a somewhat effective measure and those who consider it a not very effective measure.

Overwhelmingly, by 86% to 15%, respondents agree that the United States should encourage further economic and political integration of the European Community.

The Foreign Policy Association has carried out this national tabulation of opinion ballots as a public service. The results express the views of ***GREAT DECISIONS*** *participants, not those of the FPA, which is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization and takes no position on issues of U.S. foreign policy.*

Ballots Tabulated: 3,606

Issue A. How would you rate the following steps in terms of their effectiveness in improving U.S. competitiveness in world trade?

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective
	%	%	%
a. Reduce value of the dollar.	41	49	11
b. Raise tariffs to protect U.S. industries.	8	29	63
c. Subsidize U.S. exports.	9	47	45
d. Improve productivity of industry.	77	19	4
e. Let market forces take their course.	31	45	24
f. Encourage a new round of international trade negotiations.	49	43	8

Issue B. Should the U.S. encourage further economic and political integration of the European Community?

Yes 86%
No 15%

Topic 6: THIRD WORLD DEVELOPMENT: Old Problems, New Strategies?

Issue A

This question seeks agreement or disagreement with a number of policy options on relations with the Third World. Half the items deal with types and levels of foreign aid assistance, while the remainder deal with the manner of distribution of foreign aid.

In regard to types and levels of foreign aid, respondents are nearly unanimous in their lack of enthusiasm for providing military assistance to Third World countries, either in the form of maintaining present levels of foreign aid but shifting funds away from development and increasing military aid (7%), or by increasing military aid, which is favored by only 15%. Respondents are not against foreign aid as such, provided it is spent on development and not on military assistance: 80% agree that development assistance should be increased, and 87% agree that where foreign aid is already being provided, present levels should be maintained but shifted away from military aid and toward development.

On the manner of distribution of foreign aid, opinion varies widely. Channeling more aid through multilateral organizations is endorsed by 70% of respondents, and 52% favor channeling more aid through bilateral programs. Maintaining present levels and distribution of foreign aid is preferred by 43%, and leaving foreign aid to private voluntary organizations, the least popular option, is favored by 37%.

Ballots Tabulated: 3,949

Issue A. In its relations with the Third World, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Increase development assistance.	37	43	15	6
b. Increase military assistance.	2	13	33	52
c. Maintain present level of foreign aid, but spend more on development, less on military aid.	47	40	10	4
d. Maintain present level of foreign aid, but spend more on military aid, less on development.	1	6	25	68
e. Maintain present level and distribution of foreign aid.	8	35	37	20
f. Channel more aid through multilateral organizations.	31	39	20	11
g. Channel more aid through bilateral programs.	13	39	35	13
h. Leave foreign aid to private voluntary organizations.	11	26	33	30

Topic 7: ISRAEL and THE U.S.: Friendship and Discord

Issue A

Because the phrasing of the question links economic and military policy, the term "aid to Israel" here must be understood to include both types of aid.

A solid majority (61%) rejects increasing aid to Israel in order to help it through its economic crisis, but a slim majority (52%) is in favor of continuing the present level of aid.

When it is suggested that high levels of aid increase Israel's dependence on the United States, a majority (53%) favors cutting back aid to Israel. When it is suggested that additional conditions to U.S. aid be attached to assure its use for defensive purposes, a strong majority (72%) registers support.

Issue B

In its diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East, respondents strongly (89%) favor the United States remaining actively involved as a mediator in the peace-seeking process and pressuring both Arabs and Israelis to make concessions. By a somewhat smaller margin (70%), they disagree that the United States refrain from attempts to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict since neither side is prepared to make the concessions that are necessary for reaching agreement. Stated differently, respondents want the United States to be a major actor in the Middle East conflict, regardless of the obstacles.

While respondents strongly endorse the mediator role for the United States in the Middle East, they are widely split on one of the important issues in that conflict, autonomy for the West Bank. By a narrow margin of 51% to 49% respondents agree that the United States should drop its insistence on West Bank autonomy.

Ballots Tabulated: 3,290

Issue A. In its economic and military policy toward Israel, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Increase aid to Israel in order to help it through its economic crisis.	12	27	33	28
b. Continue present level of aid.	16	36	32	16

c. Cut back aid because high aid levels increase Israel's dependence on the U.S.	20	33	30	18
d. Attach additional conditions to U.S. aid to assure its use for defensive purposes.	39	33	15	13

Issue B. In its diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Remain actively involved as a mediator in the peace-seeking process and pressure both Arabs and Israelis to make concessions.	60	29	7	4
b. Drop insistence on West Bank autonomy.	14	37	28	21
c. Refrain from attempts to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict since neither side is prepared to make compromises necessary for reaching an agreement.	11	20	30	40

Topic 8: RELIGION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: Why the Resurgence?

Issue A

On the whole, respondents prefer that the United States adopt a neutral stance toward religious resurgence: 69% do not want the United States to welcome religious resurgence, and 71% feel that the United States should maintain a policy of strict neutrality toward religious resurgence. But neutrality gives way to partisanship when the issue is framed in terms of the suppression of religion: 69% agree that the United States should welcome religious resurgence in totalitarian countries that suppress religion. Along similar lines, only 23% favor the United States assisting other governments in suppressing extremist religious groups of the right or left.

Issue B

Respondents were asked to rank from "1" (most effective) to "8" (least effective) a series of eight policies of dealing with religious resurgence. Below is the list of items ranked in order of effectiveness:

1. Emphasize language and cultural training for diplomats.
2. Expand and improve intelligence efforts so the U.S. has early warning of hostile religious movements.
3. Strengthen U.S. information programs in countries where religious groups promoting anti-U.S. viewpoints are prominent.
4. Improve media reporting on religious leaders and their agendas.
5. Emphasize the training of regionalists rather than globalists for the diplomatic service.
6. Increase contacts with religious moderates who favor some U.S. policies and might be able to weaken extremists' support.
7. Add to the State Department a group specifically charged with monitoring transnational religious movements.
8. Support friendly heads of state when they judge it necessary to suppress religious groups or movements.

Ballots Tabulated: 2,818

Issue A. The U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Welcome religious resurgence wherever it occurs, regardless of the group or movement's politics.	6	25	31	38
b. Welcome religious resurgence in totalitarian countries which suppress religion.	22	47	18	13
c. Maintain a policy of strict neutrality toward religious resurgence.	36	35	22	6
d. Assist other governments in suppressing extremist religious groups of the right or left.	6	17	27	51

Issue B. Which of the following policies do you think would be most effective in dealing with religious resurgence? Rank the following from "1" (most effective) to "8" (least effective).

3 a. Strengthen U.S. information programs in countries where religious groups promoting anti-U.S. viewpoints are prominent.

2 b. Expand and improve intelligence efforts so the U.S. has early warning of hostile religious movements.

6 c. Increase contacts with religious moderates who favor some U.S. policies and might be able to weaken extremists' support.

8 d. Support friendly heads of state when they judge it necessary to suppress religious groups or movements.

4 e. Improve media reporting on religious leaders and their agendas.

1 f. Emphasize language and cultural training for diplomats.

5 g. Emphasize the training of regionalists rather than globalists for the diplomatic service.

7 h. Add to the State Department a group specifically charged with monitoring transnational religious movements.

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BACKGROUND ON BALLOT REPORT

The large number of ballots received made it necessary to make a scientific sample of the returns for tabulation. By randomly selecting one of every three ballots cast on the first topic and one of every two ballots cast on each of the other seven topics, for a total of 29,298 ballots tabulated (61,615 cast) by May 31, 1986, the results are the same as they would be if each ballot had been tabulated. Random selection affects only the cost of tabulation and not the representativeness of the opinions expressed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Those who filled out opinion ballots were asked to give some information about themselves.

This year, high school students made up 4% of the participants in the program, and college students 21%. All but 10% of the participants had some college education and 61% had a baccalaureate or an advanced degree. This year, 26% of the participants were 30 or under and 47% were 61 or over. Women outnumbered men almost three to two. A very high percentage of the group qualify as foreign policy "opinion leaders" in the sense that they say they are asked for their opinion on foreign policy matters often (14%) or sometimes (48%).

Because participants were asked to indicate the first three digits of their zip code on each ballot, it is possible to tell what states contributed most heavily to the tabulated results. The greatest number of ballots were received from Oregon, California, Illinois, Florida, Ohio, Colorado, New York, Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, in that order. Zip code information was missing from less than 1 percent of the tabulated ballots.

Ballots Tabulated: 3,969 (A,B,C,D,F,G)

***A. How many years have you participated in the *Great Decisions* programs (that is, attended one or more discussion sessions)?**

	%
1. This is the first year I have participated.	47
2. I participated in one previous year.	17
3. I participated in more than one previous year.	42

***B. What is your age?**

1. 17 or under	3
2. 18 to 30	23
3. 31 to 45	11
4. 46 to 60	17
5. 61 or over	47

***C. Your sex?**

1. Female	62
2. Male	39

***D. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?**

1. Some high school	4
2. High school graduate	6
3. Some college	30
4. College graduate	31
5. Advanced degree	30

E. Are you currently a student? Ballots tabulated: 1,650

1. Enrolled in high school	9
2. Enrolled in college	51
3. Enrolled in graduate school	4
4. Enrolled in adult education courses	37

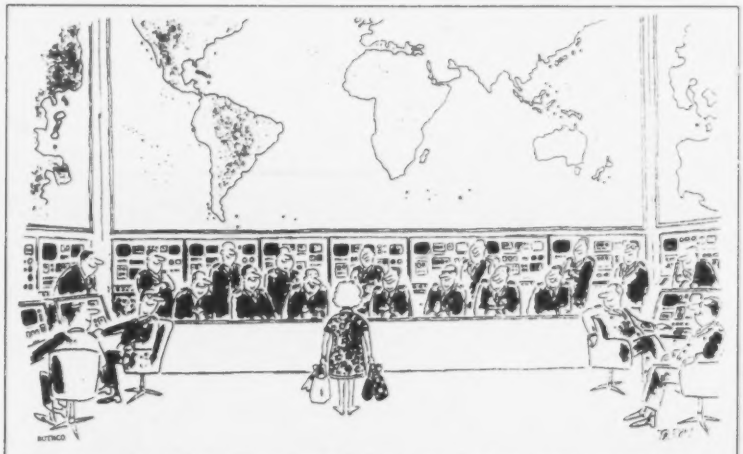
***F. How often are you asked for your opinion on foreign policy matters?**

1. Often	14
2. Sometimes	48
3. Hardly ever	38

***G. One final question. Would you say you have or have not changed your opinion in a fairly significant way as a result of taking part in the *Great Decisions* programs?**

1. Have	34
2. Have not	38
3. Uncertain	28

*7-9% nonresponse



"Now then, Mrs. Oxley, tell us exactly what it is you don't like about our missiles."

Donegan (C)Punch